

How to Succeed in the British Higher Education System
: an Essential Guide for non Native Students / Dr Michael
Grogan, Les Programmes scolaires étrangers, Le
Programme scolaire libanais II : samedi le 21 septembre
2002, samedi le 16 novembre 2002. — In : Annales de
philosophie et des sciences humaines. — N° 15 (2003),
pp. 75-76.

Cover title : Annales de philosophie et des sciences
humaines

1. Education — England. 2. Curricula — England.

PER L1044 / FP152357P

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATIONNAL SYSTEM, AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR NON NATIVE STUDENTS

Kaslik, le 21 septembre 2002

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One of the issues in further education that continues to limit the success of students in their particular fields is the level of study skills possessed and how these skills are developed and applied. The purpose of my talk was to explore the relationship between the way these skills are introduced and presented at different stages of the educational process and the potential results a more collective approach, by the professionals involved in the acquisition of these skills would have. This would involve a reassessment of some methods of teaching and testing at different points in the education of students, in terms of the institutions and student's requirements over the entire period of this process.

Students need different skills at every stage of schooling and there are some practical considerations that limit particular practices, such as the level of control needed in High School compared with University. However, some study skills can be introduced and developed within a more controlled environment and would, I feel, provide a more comprehensive basis for more effective autonomous learning later. An example of this would be to include more project work in high school. This type of activity offers students the opportunity to research a particular subject using whatever mediums are available (internet, library, media other school resources) and collate the information and present it in personalised way thus developing reference skills and also becoming more aware of their own learning styles.

The trend in schools is to work towards tests using textbooks that do not allow personal development which necessitates the learning of another «different», more complex set of skills for University study. I would suggest that the skills needed at University should be perceived as an extension of what was considered normal practice in the High school system. The skills that are essential at University can be included in a High school curriculum initially in a «watered down» way and used in progressively more complex situations. All students entering University should be able to use a library effectively, have adequate referencing skills and be able to time manage and organise information in terms successful completion of the task provided. It is the responsibility of schools to allow students to acquire these fundamentals. I believe a more balanced approach to would benefit both the students and the learning institutions in terms of success.

To make a difference would, of course, need educationists to work together to identify the skills needed at University and to implement more study skills related work in the High School system. This would give students a greater opportunity to concentrate more on their intellectual development instead of struggling with what are essentially more mechanical processes.

Many people would consider that many of the points mentioned are already part of the standard curriculum. However, the reality is that many students at University do not possess what are essentially basic study skills. Not possessing these skills hinders development and blocks creativity.